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## CLOSE-KNIT TEAM OF 'MAINTAINERS' KEEPS V CORPS INFANTRY BATTALION ROLLING

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**FORWARD OPERATING BASE UVANNI, Iraq --** Mechanics of V Corps' Company B, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division have gotten very good at keeping their unit's M2 Bradley Armored Fighting Vehicles in the fight here.



**STAFF SGT DUANE M. BROWN**  
Senior turret mechanic Spc. Leroy P. Lindsay of V Corps' 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Infantry, 1st Infantry Division, fixes a gun mount on a Bradley M2 Armored Fighting Vehicle at Forward Operating Base Uvanni, Iraq.

It hasn't always been easy, the "maintainers" say. Their year here has offered them some real challenges.

"The conditions we have been operating in have been extreme," said Company B team chief Staff Sgt. Kevin S. McCleary. "Weather goes from cold and wet and muddy in the

winter months to temperatures that reach and exceed 140 degrees."

And one other thing -- attacks with mortars and small-arms fire. Earlier in the week one of the maintenance team members was injured when a mortar round struck five feet away while he was repairing a Bradley.

"It is livable, but there is always that gut feeling of danger, because you have no idea where that next mortar round is going to hit," McCleary said. "Just because we have walls around us doesn't mean we are out of harm's way."

Hot, muddy or dangerous, it is still the maintainers' job to keep the unit up to strength and rolling. If vehicles "go down" due to attacks with improvised explosive devices, car bombs or land mines, or just because of general maintenance needs -- as from four to six of them a day do -- the mechanics repair them and get them back into the fight.

"Not only do we repair Bradleys, the maintenance teams repair any vehicle that goes down in the city," said senior turret mechanic Spc. Leroy P. Lindsay.

To manage such a large task, the teams -- currently manned by 10 Soldiers -- operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, broken down into functions like a professional racing pit crew.

"When a vehicle comes in, the whole team jumps on a vehicle and takes care of the repairs and gets it back out into the fight," said Bradley systems specialist Spc. Koua Lor.

But the team isn't all work and no play. They try to keep their morale high by challenging each other.

"Besides wrestling with one another, the guys often compete to see who's the fastest when it comes to making certain repairs," McCleary said. "With a predetermined amount of push-ups on the line, the competition level is high."

When asked who is the fastest, the whole crew chimed in: "It depends on which thing we are working on," several said as the room erupted in a wave of laughter.

But the bottom line is still a serious task, and the team members say it's a challenge they're more than up to.

"This group of Soldiers does their jobs with a high level of professionalism and without fail," said Bradley gunner Spc. Steven R. DuBois. "They are an important part of our job, without them we wouldn't be at full strength."

